

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK
RARE BIRD RECORDS
DECEMBER, 2002 - FEBRUARY, 2003

Attached is a list of observations reported by visitors and staff for the period December, 2002 - February, 2003. I've compiled observations for species which are listed as **Sporadic, Rare, Accidental, Hypothetical** or **Not included** (?) on the park's checklist. A "?win" indicates a species which is documented for the park but not in the winter season.

A welcome change this winter has been the regular appearance of rain through the season. Overall, temperatures were very mild, with no hard cold fronts and, for the first time in several years, no measurable snowfalls. Some of the coldest weather for the period didn't occur until February when two cold, wet fronts passed through. The last front (February 21-23) was a little bizarre, bringing hard winds, cold temperatures, thunder and lightning, and a light dusting of snow in the highest elevations. A comparison of current precipitation totals through February with the same period last year (+ or -) illustrates the recovery from drought conditions a year ago: Panther Junction; 1.45" (+1.31"), Chisos Basin; 1.82" (+1.70"), Rio Grande Village; 1.50" (+1.49"), Castolon; 1.07" (+1.04"), and Persimmon Gap; 1.61" (+1.42").

The mild and wet conditions were conducive to good wintering bird populations, particularly flycatchers, bluebirds, mimids, and sparrows. Birders on the annual Christmas Counts (December 28-29) noted improved food crop conditions, and species and individual numbers were up over the previous year.

Highlights for the season included some unusual species for the Christmas counts - eared grebe, gray catbird, Townsend's and hermit warblers, and purple finch. Brown creeper observations were unusually high this winter, and Eastern and mountain bluebirds made good showings at lower elevations. Townsend's solitaires were present in good numbers late in the period in the Chisos. A number of gray catbirds were very unusual this winter, with one individual over-wintering at Panther Junction from December 2 through February 9. Sage thrashers also returned this winter, after a marked absence last year.

Kelly Bryan has been having entirely too much fun with his retirement, running around performing bird surveys throughout the park, and reporting some very interesting sparrow observations (Cassin's, sage, grasshopper, and a possible LeConte's) in the low desert scrub/grassland areas. He had a real plum in an immature **northern goshawk** at Castolon on February 14th. The last accepted record of this review species was an immature at Sam Nail Ranch on September 9, 1999. Finally, just for grins, Kelly found the season's only winter wren, singing no less, at the Barker house on the same day. We should all retire and follow Kelly's lead...

There were several reports of unusual species during the period, all of which lacked sufficient detail or any follow-up reports to confirm the observations. Short-tailed hawk 2 miles south of Dugout Wells on 2/14 (first documented park record was 4/28/02:Benesh); two pauraques along the Boquillas Canyon road on 2/05, (no previous records); Bendire's thrasher at RGV on 1/25 (nine previous reports but none documented/accepted): eastern towhee in the Chisos Basin on January 2 (only accepted Trans-Pecos record March 4-22, 19987 in El Paso County - per Peterson & Zimmer); and a summer tanager at Sam Nail Ranch on 1/19 (?winter).

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<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>PARK STATUS</u>
Eared grebe	1	12/29	CBC-RGV	Kathy McCormack	rare
Ross's goose	1	12/16	Terlingua Creek	Clark Lourien	acc.
Ruddy duck	2	02/13	Boquillas Cyn Overlook	Tom VandenBerg	acc
Northern goshawk	1*	02/14	Castolon	Kelly Bryan	acc.
*Review Species: Report/photos to TBRC:Lockwood pending review. Accepted by TBRC - 8/03					
Crested caracara	1	12/18	Hot Springs Trail	Karen Bonnet	acc.
Burrowing owl	1	01/02	Glenn Spring Rd	Karen Russell	?win
Long-eared owl	2	01/04	Gano Spring	Tom VandenBerg	rare
	4	02/17	Trap Spring	Andrew, Connor Rene Franks	rare
Black-chinned Hummingbird	1m	02/14	Panther Junction	Mark Flippo	early
Anna's Hummingbird	3-4	11/19-1/20	Panther Junction	Mark Flippo	rare
	1	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	Tom VandenBerg	rare
	1m	02/24	Panther Junction	Mark Flippo	rare
Green kingfisher	2m,f	12/1-31	RGV-Nature Trail	many observers	rare
Williamson's Sapsucker	1m	02/28	Southwest Rim	Jamie Granger Brian Cook	acc.
Gray flycatcher	1	02/06	Cottonwood Camp.	Mark Flippo	rare
Ash-throated Flycatcher	3	12/29	CBC-RGV	Several observers	spo.
	1	01/17	Rio Grande Vill.	Mark Flippo	spo.
Blue-headed vireo	2	02/09	Cottonwood Camp.	Mark Flippo	rare
Warbling vireo	1	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	Kathy McCormack	?win
Western Scrub-jay	3	12/28	CBC-Chisos Circle	K.Stinnet	spo.
	1	02/09	Basin oxid. Ponds	Mark Flippo	spo.

Chihuahuan raven	2	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	M.Adams,M&M Eastman L.Long	rare
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Brown creeper	1	12/15	RGV-Daniels Ranch	John Caufield	spo.
	2	12/28	CBC-RGV Circle	several observers	spo.
	1	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	K.Beckwith,M.Flippo K.Stinnet	spo.
	1	01/11	RGV-Daniels Ranch	Mark Flippo	spo.
	1	01/17	RGV-RV camp	Mark Flippo	spo.
Winter wren	1	02/14	Barker House	Kelly Bryan	acc.
Mountain bluebird	~50	02/10	Maverick	Bill Bourbon	spo.
	10	02/17	Panther Junction	Dan Muntean	spo.
Gray catbird	1	12/02-2/09	Panther Junction	Mark Flippo	acc.
	1	12/24	RGV-Nature Trail	John McCormack	acc.
	1	02/13	Barker House	Kelly Bryan	acc.
	1	02/08	Chisos Basin	Richard Palmer	acc.
	1	02/28	Panther Junction	Tom VandenBerg	acc.
Sage thrasher	11	12/28	CBC-Chisos Circle	several observers	spo.
	1	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	M.Flippo,K.Stinnet	spo.
	1	1/01-2/28	parkwide	Many observers	spo.
Townsend's Warbler	2	12/28	CBC-Chisos Circle	Kathy McCormack	spo.
Hermit warbler	1	12/28	CBC-Chisos Circle	Kathy McCormack	spo.
Clay-colored Sparrow	2	12/28	CBC-Chisos Circle	Mark Flippo	spo.
	2	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	M.Adams.M&M Eastman L.Long	spo.
	1	02/09	Basin oxid. Ponds	Mark Flippo	spo.
Sage sparrow	1	12/28	CBC-Chisos Circle	Mark Flippo	spo.
	1	02/13	Maverick Road	Kelly Bryan	spo.
	Several	02/13-28	Fossil Bone/Hart Ranch Rd	Kelly Bryan	spo.
Grasshopper					

Sparrow	4	02/13	Fossil Bone	Kelly Bryan	spo.
Lark bunting	116	12/28	CBC-Chisos Circle	several observers	spo.

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Fox sparrow	1	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	K.Beckwith,M.Flippo K.Stinnet	spo.
Song Sparrow	9	12/29	CBC-RGV Circle	several observers	rare
Dark-eyed junco (Slate-colored)	1	02/09	Basin Oxid. Ponds	Mark Flippo	rare
Purple finch	3m,f	12/09	Panther Junction	Mark Flippo	acc.
	3m,f	12/29	CBC-Chisos Circle	Kathy McCormack	acc.
Cassin's finch	2m,f	01/19	Sam Nail Ranch	Susan Townsend	spo.